

A SERMON

P R E A C H D

Before the Right Honourable

THE

Lord Mayor,

AND THE

Court of Aldermen.

At GUILD-HALL, December the 27th 1685.

By LUKE BEAULIEU, B. D.

Chaplain to the Right Honourable G E O R G E Lord
JEFFREYS, Lord High Chancellor of Eng-
land, and one of the Lords of His Majesty's most
Honourable Privy-Council.

Licenc'd

Z. Iffham. Jan. 7. 1685.

L O N D O N :

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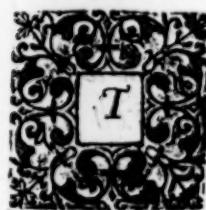
*Curia special' tent' die Dominica, in festo
Sandi Johannis Evangeliste, xxvii.^o
die Decembris, 1685: Annoq; Regni
Regis Jacobi secundi, Angl', &c. pri-
mo:*

This Court doth desire Mr. Beaulieu to print
his Sermon this day Preached in the Guild-hall-
Chappel before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen
of this City.

Wagstaffe.

To the Right Honourable
S^r. Robert Geffery
Lord Mayor of L O N D O N .

My Lord,



Hat wrangling and violence
some have used, for the Faith,
as they pretended, bath been
much to its prejudice ; and
bath appear'd to be rather for
a Secular Interest. Fighting for the
Gospel is as preposterous, as if a man shoud
fight, to shew his meekness and patience. It
is that contention with God and our selves,
which I here recommend, that bath had the
approbation of the best Ages of the Church,
and been blest with success.

The state of things as they are at pre-
sent, doth severely admonish us of our for-
mer miscarriages, and our present duty.

A 2

Tis

Epistle Dedicatory.

Tis seen that a furious and ungovernable Spirit, which some have miscall'd Zeal, is of pernicious consequence. God Almigh-ty, to keep us within the bounds of our duty, and make us seek our safety in its per-formance, would not permit unlawful means any ways to conduce to the pre-servation of his true Religion.

Long experience hath now shew'd us, that to disturb the Peace in Church and State, to break the ties of Allegiance, and disobey the Church, promotes nothing but Licentiousness and Irreligion. So . that 'tis to be hop'd, they that have lik'd and follow'd those methods, are now sensi-ble of the iniquity and the mischief of them ; and that the remembrance of their mistakes and misdoings , will make them now the more humble and quiet ; and effectually persuade them to the Union and Obedience of this Church, whose Doctrine is the Creed, or Christianity it

Epistle Dedicatory.

it self; whose Government is truly Apostolick; and whose Rituals and Devotions are most Primitive and Pious.

An understanding man would blush to own himself before the Christian World to be of such or such a Sect, and to confess that his publick Worship depends upon the abilities and extemporary effusions of a person not inspired; besides the mischief of such divisions, there is a shame that goeth along with them. But the Church of England, as now establish'd, hath had many cheerful Martyrs and Confessors: Many wise and good men glory to own Her for Mother, and dare profess and justify, that according to that way She prescribes, and some count Heresie, so they worship the God of their Fathers. God Almighty hath appointed that devout Prayers & good Lives should at first propagate, and ever after preserve the Religion of the Blessed

Epistle Dedicatory.

sed Jesuſ : If we but double our Zeal in
theſe, we ſhall infallibly ſecure its Pu-
rity, and ſtill make it flouriſh.

To excite us to this duty, I preach'd the
enſuing Discouſe ; to the ſame end, I
make no doubt, Your Lordſhip com-
manded it ſhould be made publick : Your
approving the good Design, made You
paſſ-by the defects of its manage-
ment; My Lord, I have obey'd, much
pleaſed that we have Magiſtrates who
ſo muſh countenance and befriend Religi-
on, as to accept of ſuch mean endea-
vours for the ſervice of it.

May the ſucceſſion of them ſtill pre-
ſerve Peace, and promote Truth and
Righteousneſs ; and may Your Lord-
ſhip, after a long and proſperous life in
this World, obtain the endless and perfect
Bliss of a better. So prayeth heartily

Your Lordſhips

Moſt Humble and Obedient Servant,

Luke Beaulieu.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

Lord Mayor

AND

Court of Aldermen.

Epist. of St. Jude, v. 3.

—And exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.

FOR the solemnity of this great Festival, the Church appointed three sorts of Martyrs to wait on the *Prince of Sufferings*, who at this time was born to die for Mankind; St. Stephen, who actually died for Christ, and *made it his choice so to do*; St. John, (whose memorial the Church observes this day) who was willing to die, and yielded up himself, but *was rescued by a miracle*; and the holy *Innocents*, who unknown to themselves lost their lives for Christ, and became his Martyrs *without concurrence of their will*. An

An Exhortation therefore at this time *to contend for the Faith*, may very well agree with the joyful celebration of His happy Birth, who is the Author and the Finisher of it : Especially having before our eyes the Example and the Memorial of *those great Contenders*, who resisted unto blood, and cheerfully gave up their lives for the cause of their *Christian Faith*,

To this St. Jude here exhorts us. He is writing against those Hereticks who subverted the foundations of Christianity ; *turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ* : Men that would comply with any thing, rather than expose themselves to Persecution, and would accommodate the Profession of our Saviour's Doctrine to their lusts and to their safety.

Against these whom here the Apostle describes to be very bad and dangerous men, he cautions those Christians who as yet adhered to the simplicity of the Gospel, which he calls *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*.

Delivered first by our Blessed Saviour to his Apostles, and by them preach'd to the world, and committed to faithful men who should teach others. And, lest that oral Tradition should be corrupted, written by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for the sure and certain instruction of after-ages.

This Faith profest by the Christian Church, the Congregation of God's Saints, he here exhorts them to maintain pure and undefiled : Not to admit of those mixtures which evil men had devised to serve their lusts and their worldly designs ; not to shrink from their adherence to Christ, and confessing him before men by obedience to his Laws, and a constant profession of his true Religion ; but rather constantly own and keep the same, against all oppositions and temptations whatever.

This

This is here call'd a *contending for the Faith* : and this contention, we may say, consists as well now as in the Apostles time, in these following particulars :

First, In making an open and constant profession of the Christian Faith.

Secondly, In conforming our lives to its Rules and Precepts.

Thirdly, In a devout performing of those acts of Worship and Piety which are enjoyn'd by it.

And *fourthly* and *lastly*, By giving it all that credit and establishment in the world, of which we are capable in our several places.

Whil'st I insist upon these, as briefly as I can, I shall sufficiently explain the sense of the Text, and shew its design, and reprove some mistakes about it.

First then, to *contend for the Faith*, includes the making an open and constant profession of it : Not any ways to disseminate, or detain the Truth in unrighteousness, for any advantage in the World, or for fear of Persecution ; like these false and dissembling *Gnosticks*, who, rather than venture any thing, would say as others said, and comply with false Religions, sooner than expose themselves to danger. The Apostle contrariwise would have Christians own what they were : *Confess Christ before men, and not be ashamed for his Testimony*; *As they believed in their hearts, so to confess with their mouth*, (as St. Paul speaks.) Or, in words of St. Peter, *to be ready always with meekness to give an answer of the reason of the hope that was in them.*

This is the duty of every man, who is serious and upright in his Religion. He is not to model it according to conveniences, or to choose that which is most safe and profitable: but as he is led by his conscience and his understanding, so to act and declare himself.

For every one who doth not trifle with God and his own Soul, doth believe that his Salvation depends upon his choice of the true Religion, and that he must *be faithful unto death to receive the crown of life*: And then, upon this persuasion, he never consults what is like to be the event; but it is his Duty and his great Interest to embrace this Truth, and to make profession of it, and accordingly he acts, and leaves the success to God.

But then hereupon we must observe these three things. *First*, That it should be *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, we so steadfastly adhere to. That which hath the attestation of the Universal Church from the beginning, and hath been accounted fundamental, necessary to Salvation, and so held universally; as, the *Apostles Creed*, confirm'd and explain'd by the Primitive Councils; *That* we should faithfully cleavè to. Rather affect to prove our selves Christians, by our firm adherence to that Faith wherein we were baptized, and which we profess living and dying, together with the rest of the Christian Church; I say, rather lay the great stress upon this than upon others more uncertain and controverted Opinions, which beget new denominations, and much uncharitableness.

It is not our humours, nor private fancies, nor the Disputes of the Schools, the Assertions of imperious Dogmatists, nor the Decisions of latter Synods, we are thus earnestly

earnestly to maintain and to contend for : but *the Faith* once delivered to the *Saints*, which is never to change nor to increase, and which good men hoped to be sav'd by, for more than a thousand years together.

There is no new Revelation from God, no new way to Heaven to be discover'd ; that which sufficed before *Trent*, or *Lateran*, or *Dort*, is still sufficient. That which hath been done or decreed in latter-ages, is not the Faith of our common Salvation, and not to be contended for with the same earnestness.

There are indeed Articles of Peace and terms of Communion in every particular Church, the needs of Religious Societies, and the Laws of Christian Magistrates, make these useful, and of great necessity ; a due regard is to be had to them ; and a good man is oblig'd to conform in every thing which God hath not forbidden. But yet, these are not of the same moment as Articles of Faith. For instance : That there is no *Roman Purgatory*, although I firmly believe it as it is declared by our Church, yet that cannot be so certain, nor of so great an interest to me, as what God himself hath revealed with the greatest perspicuity, that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*. And accordingly I am not to be so intent nor so concern'd in the denying of the one, as in the professing and believing of the other.

Would Christians of different Communions thus distinguish between the *Divine and saving Article* which is a point of Christian Faith, and the *human decision and constitution*, it would much contribute to make up the breaches of *Christendom*, and qualify that mischevous and persecuting Zeal, which lays a greater weight upon difference of Opinions, than upon unity of the same Creed.

For the most part, our loudest contentions are about that which is less material, and more disputable, contrary to St. Jude, who would have us be earnest for what is essential, *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*: which is to be contended for, not because it is *ours*, and so to be maintain'd with anger, and impatience of contradiction, as we do those Opinions we are wedded to; but because it is *God's*, deliver'd by our Blessed Lord to the Primitive Saints, for the common Salvation of Mankind. Then if any deny and deprave that Faith, they forfeit the benefits of it, which are infinite, and so are great losers, and much to be pitied: And if we our selves embrace and keep it steadfastly to the end, we shall obtain the end thereof, even the Salvation of our Souls. And that's enough to engage us to make a free and constant profession of it as long as we live.

Secondly, This contending for the Faith, by an open Profession, is so far from including any thing of fighting or violence for the defence of Religion, that it signifies the quite contrary, the utmost meekness and patience in suffering for the Truth.

Many are very apt and forward to contend for their Faith, or rather their *Faction*, by a Zeal of opposition, which is commonly violent, and prompts men to clamour and rail, to persecute, and to shed blood. Hatred, Injustice, Cruelty, even Rebellion, the most mischevous and worst of all Crimes, are pretended to be all warranted, when undertaken upon *Religious accounts*; They think they may lawfully fight for what they call *God's Cause, and his quarrel*.

But

But, I say, such men are not led by the Spirit of Christianity, they follow the fierceness of their own, and the dictates of their angry passions : And this sort of Zeal hath ever been very pernicious to Mankind, and destructive of Religion.

The Jews upon this Principle hated and destroy'd Christians with a mighty violence, and in the same manner rebell'd against their Governours : Their Zealots disturb'd the whole world, and at last became a bloody scourge to themselves. St. Jude was too well acquainted with them, and too well knew by his own experience the mischief of this sort of temper, and of such proceedings, to exhort Christian Converts to contend for Christ in that manner as the Jews did for Moses. He knew that our Blessed Saviour would not let his Servants fight for him, nor rescue him with the Sword from the hands of the Civil Magistrate ; That he told his Apostles *they should not disturb nor oppose Princes, but should be brought before Kings and Rulers for his names sake;* And that his promises of an Immortal Crown, were not to fighting and martial courage upon his account, but to meekness and patience, and remaining faithful unto death. *He that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it,*

So here, this Apostle, who had the Example and the Words of our Saviour, and knew full well his mind in this, exhorts his afflicted Disciples not to follow the steps of those Hereticks who in time of trial fell away ; and, as he saith, would denie their Saviour, rather than suffer for his sake ; but to persevere unto the end, contending earnestly for the Faith they had received.

A Zeal

A Zeal of adherence to Christ, to confess and own him before men, which is here recommended, doth not beget fierceness or wrangling contention in the mind; but a peaceable constancy, a resolution to be firm and unmoveable in passive Graces. As the greatest Victory of a Christian is to die for his Saviour; so the noblest contention is to suffer for him. Accordingly 'tis said of those Christian Conquerours whom St. John saw with Palms in their hands, that *they loved not their lives unto the death.* In the language of the Church *certamina Martyrum*, the combate of Martyrs, was their enduring patiently the pains and reproaches of their Martyrdom. They were called the *Athleas*, or Champions of Christ; and the constancy of their passions upon his account was their Victory.

Hence the sign of the Cross came to be so venerable, and so frequently used amongst Primitive Christians, in those days of severe trial. They would by *that token*, before Christ's greatest Enemies and Persecutors, own themselves to be his Servants, who for them had died on the Cross; and declare, that they were ready cheerfully also to lay down their lives for his sake. He must labour hard with himself to overcome Flesh and Blood, that would arrive to this resolution: And therefore, this is the most earnest contention a Christian can undertake for the Faith, to lay down his life for it, and sign and confess it with his blood.

And then, *thirdly*, we may observe as a consequent from this, That if this be a duty, and here enjoyn'd by St. Jude, much more is it an incumbent duty openly to profess the Faith of Christ crucified, when the doing of it is not attended with any such Persecutions or Dangers.

If

If under Heathen Emperours, when Christianity was opposed, and every-where spoken against, yet its Professors were obliged freely and sincerely to declare themselves, and own their relation to Christ, though they died for it ; much more are they bound to this, that live under Christian Princes, under Laws that enforce their Obligations to confess that true Catholick and Apostolick Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.

If we are bound thus to contend for it, in a way so difficult, even by Death, as the Moble Army of Martyrs, if God should make it our case ; much more are we to profess it, when we can do it with safety, nay and have many encouragements and advantages in the world, in the performance of this great duty.

God of his special favour to us, hath made it our Interest, even in this life. We may now dwell in Churches, and exercise our selves to all Godliness, and be as virtuous and as devout as ever any Christians were, without incurring any inconvenience. We need not fear for our Faith lest it should be supprest, if we our selves betray it not, by our lukewarmness and indifference for it. We are even subject to the inflictions of our Magistrates, for neglecting the duties of our Christian Worship. And so we lose and suffer much more for not being faithful to Christ, than for owning relation to him.

So that, now, when Divine Providence makes it so easie and so profitable, we ought very seriously to mind this exhortation, to contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, by an open and constant profession of it.

And

And in the second place also, by conforming our lives to its Rules and Precepts. That mightily conduceth to the establishment of the Faith, and requires a very serious Application and Endeavour of our side.

We must hold the mystery of Faith in a pure conscience, as the Scripture faith; and our hearts are to be purified by Faith. It is a very preposterous Zeal to be earnest against the errors of other mens understandings, whil'st the depravations of our own wills are unreformed. A man shall raise loud clamours against anothers mistake, not known to the person guilty of it, whil'st he himself transgresleth knowingly, in things which his own conscience checks, and which are expressly forbidden by his Religion. This looks very odd; and such Zeal is to be suspected, not to be so much for God, as for a temporal design.

For our Faith laieth the great stres of our duty and of our hopes upon our own Works, the choice we make of doing good or evil. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments. Neither the Unrighteous (saith the Apostle), nor Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. They that believe this, and remain impenitent in any of these sins, they may dispute for their Opinions, but they contend not for the Faith; rather, as much as in them lies, they confute it with their own works. For so St. Paul joyns together Faith and a good conscience, and tells us, that they that put away the one, soon make shipwreck as to the other. 1 Tim. i. 19.

The seeds of Infidelity are in Vice ; it corrupts the very dictates of Reason. Vile and vicious affections raise Objections against those Divine and Holy Truths which reprove and condemn them. An ill Life and a good Religion sincerely profest , are inconsistent : So that in some cases it may be said of a Christian, who grossly and wilfully prevaricates against his Rule, in the words of St. Paul, *He hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.*

Therefore, when a man hath learned the Fundamentals of Religion, and knows his Duty, the great stress of his endeavours must next be laid upon the performance of it. That he should fight under Christ's Banner, against his own evil intuitions, against all sin and immorality.

This contention St. Jude here recommends, by describing those Hereticks against whom he writes , as very impure in their lives, and factious and ungovernable in their deportment. *They walked after their own Lusts ; filthy Dreams , who defiled the flesh, despised Dominion, and spake evil of Dignities.*

By exhorting Christians to contend earnestly for the Faith, in opposition to these, he means, not only their false Doctrines, but also their evil deeds, against which he is most vehement.

And indeed, it requires a more earnest contention for a man to subdue his own corruptions, than to assent to a revealed Truth. It is a thing of more difficulty to obey the holy Commandment, than to embrace an Article of Belief.

Withal, This Obedience to Divine Precepts, is that which our primitive Faith most of all recommends ; that which is universally assented to by all sorts of Christians ; there is no controversie in this. Points of Doctrine are variously understood and disputed about ; but in the practical part of Religion, that which concerns a good life, all men are agreed ; That it shall be well with them that fear God ; That to take heed unto the thing that is right, shall bring a man peace at the last ; And that good Works shall have a good Reward.

The living by these measures, is that whereby a Christian glorifies God in the world, justifies the sincerity of his Faith, separates himself from Hypocrites and Unbelievers ; and confirms his own heart, in the sure comfortable belief of the Christian Doctrine ; nay, and recommends it to others.

The true way to build up our selves in our most holy Faith, and to propagate it in the World, is to shew its excellency and efficacy by the fruits of it in our lives. This way the Apostles confuted false Religions, and converted even those that persecuted the Gospel. By their bearing the Yoak of Christ, and by their Obedience to him, they brought under his subjection the Kingdoms of the Earth. It was neither by false or fearful dissimulation, nor by violence, they made Proselytes, but by approving themselves to every mans conscience in the sight of God.

That

That way will ever be effectual to preserve the credit of true Religion, and persuade men to embrace it; and will be the lasting happiness of every faithful Believer. *Tit. 3. 8. This I will that thou affirm constantly, That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works : These things are good and profitable unto men.*

Thirdly, We ought to contend for the Faith, by a devout attendance upon those acts of Worship and Piety which are enjoyned by it. Nothing contributes more to the increase and establishment of true Religion, than the earnest Devotion of its Professors. It is the way to strive together for the Faith of the Gospel, as St. Paul exhorts. And it is the complement of that Spiritual Armour wherewith he would have us fight against the great Enemy of our Salvation. Ephes. 6. after the Shield of Faith, &c. v. 18. Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watchning thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all Saints.

Few were the Books of Controversie, and few the Disputes of Christians amongst themselves in the Ages of fervent Devotion, but great was their Piety. They daily received the Blessed Sacrament, to express their thankfulness to God for the Mercies of our Redemption, and to tie themselves to Obedience and Virtue. And they offer'd to God continually the Sacrifice of Praise. They brought them that were in error to the Worship of the true God,

by their assiduousness, in the doing of it themselves.

A Zeal against different Religions, where it is not guarded with a due care to love and to serve God according to our own, degenerates commonly into cruelty and uncharitableness. So it did with the zealot *Jews*: so with the persecuting Heathen, and so it hath prov'd amongst too many Christians, to the no small prejudice of true Religion. Whereas in all Ages of the Church, there hath been always so much of substantial goodness, as there hath been of true Devotion in any hearts. *Cornelius*, though uncircumcised; *Simeon* and *Hannah*, who were *Jews*, they are represented as very devout People, and great Exemplars of Vertue. But in Contentions and Disputes, for the most part, men will speak their Passions, more than their Piety.

It is a dangerous deceit to rest in *Negatives*, be they never so true, and to make Religion consist in clamouring against errors, though never so palpable, whil'st we neglect Christian duties. So, to be very fierce against Transubstantiation, and neglect to receive the Blessed Sacrament; to make loud invectives against Prayers to Saints, and offer none to God, or but very cold ones, and very seldom, as hath been here too much in use amongst us: that shews only that some men are great enemies to one Party, and to some Opinions, and no friends to Christianity. For if it were love to the Truth they are seriously concerned for, they would be at least as zealous in attending the true Worship of God, as they are against the errors of some about it.

Indeed

Indeed errors should be reprov'd, and the truth asserted by good and able men : But the noise of others is not like to signifie much, nor will demonstrations alone. They that dissent from us, on either hand, have long enough been basled, by unanswerable Arguments. But these are above the leisure and the capacity of many, who observe your deportment better ; and may be warm'd with the Zeal of your Devotion, and perswaded by your Example. So that now, they that are not of our Communion, may sooner be gained by our wrastling with God, than by our contending with them.

Such are our Offices of publick Religion, so excellent and so divine , that no sincere Christian, though not of our Church, but must approve them, & might joyne with us ; The great Objection is, our own neglect of them. If we remove that , by a more assiduous and devout attendance upon Divine Worship, we shall find that the best way to win others to use and approve, more and more, our form and most pious Liturgy : And if we rescue it from our own prophanes and indevotion, we need not fear any opposition from without, should ever prevaile against it.

But thus to contend with God, in humble and earnest Supplications and Prayers, requires a very earnest contending with our own selves. It is one of the great Infilicities of our Nature that we are very backward to Pray. Either our sins make a separation betwixt God and Us : Or the Cares and Solitudes of this World keep our Souls groveling here below : So that, although we know that God is ready to hear Prayers, and Commands us to ask that he may have and Opportunity to give, yet we can hardly lift up our Hearts unto him. We are dull and

and untoward, and our thoughts are apt to scatter when we come to Petition and to Worship in his Holy Presence. And a man must have labour'd with himself very seriously, to bring his Soul to a Praying temper, and to keep it in such a frame, as to be habitually dispos'd to converse with God. To keep upon his Heart a fresh and lively sense of Religious Thoughts and Affections, a man must keep his passions in subjection to reason, and strictly watch over himself.

That fervent Prayer which St. James faith availeth much, can not be offer'd up to God, without the utmost striving and endeavours of a Christian. It is a very earnest and effectual contending for the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, to recommend it devoutly to his Blessing and Protection, who is the Author and the Finisher of it ; to be pressing with him to maintain his own Cause. To bring all Infidels to the knowledg, and all Christians into the Unity of that saving Faith ; to make it triumph over all errors and vices that it may flourish and bring forth fruit in all the World.

Also to beseech him to encrease it in us, That Christ may dwell in our Hearts by Faith : And by that Faith we may overcome the World and all Temptations : And gain comfort and assurance to our immortal souls, against that day of sorrow, when all our Friends and Enjoyments shall be useles, and we shall be refresh'd and supported by nothing but our Christian hopes, and the belief of things not seen ; That, as the Apostle speaks, *we may be kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation.*

To be fervent and assiduous in these requests, is a contending for the Faith, in a way acceptable to God, & profitable to our selves ; more likely to secure us from a change, than a blind Zeal, and ignorant Declamations against the errors of others.

That Religion can never perish which God appointed to save Souls. If we affectionately embrace ours, which is certainly the most pure and primitive in the World : If we use and profess it to that purpose, to make our selves eternally happy, it will secure us from the fears and from the danger of its being corrupted or Destroyed ; and it will recommend it to the acceptance of others, when they see it makes us the Friends and devout Worshippers of God.

A great Zeal against those that dissent from us, may proceed from ill nature or from ill designes : But a great Zeal for our own Souls ; diligent care to endeare our selves to God and secure his mercys to us : that's liable to no suspicion ; that well becomes the nature of our excellent Religion , and is indeed the end of it.

So that we cannot contend for the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, nor for our benefit, or the conversion of others, than by a devout attendance upon Acts of Worship and Piety, and joyning hertily with our Church in those Religious dutys she requires from us.

Lastly,

Lastly, This contention for the Faith includes, that we should give it all that reputation and establishment in the World, of which we are capable in our several places.

This is the most direct meaning and design of the Text, according to some Translations which render the words by another construction, *That ye should assist and confirm the Saints in their Faith.* That is, Edifie the Church; do what ye can towards the enlarging and settlement of it.

We have had, for these last ages, much contending about the Faith, but little hath been done for it. Some have been very forward to pull down what they thought amiss, but built up nothing. They shewed a great aversion to some Religions, but no love to any. So their contention was only for War: And the result of it was, that the Church was neglected and spoilt, its patrimony made a prey, its discipline destroyed: And Religion it self made contemptible, by being depriv'd of its necessary maintenance and authority: And that brought in at last Libertinism, and a sad inundation of vice and irreligion.

For plainly, all the World understands, the suré way to keep out all false Religions, is strenuously to maintain the true one; to make it honourable and of force to restrain dissolute looseness; and to provide it with supplies for the necessity of its ministrations. We need not dispute and scuffle with all the errors that are broacht and,

and have been in every age : But embrace and assert the truth, and support it with our might and interest in the World : That's a good way to shew our selves in earnest in contending for the Faith, to be willing to contribute what we can, with our credit and our substance, to make it reverenc't and obeyed.

It was ever accounted an Act of Piety to God and Charity to human Souls, to make pious foundations for the divine honour, for to sound the praises of God in the Earth. To provide for his Ministers, that they may attend holy Offices without Distraction: And to erect and adorne houses for divine worship, that it may have as much solemnity and veneration as lies in us to procure.

Primitive Christians betimes, even under poverty and persecutions, were very Zealous in these, and gave us a good example. As miracles ceased, and those extraordinary means which supported Religion, they upheld and advanc't it, in the ordinary ways of things here below, with their abilities, and their power, and estates. They thought no cost better spent, no labour better bestow'd than what serv'd to promote Christianity, and recommend it to the World.

They understood that our Christian Faith is a body of Divine Science, and several Ordinances, and administrations, which to be learnt and taught and ministered as they should, want the help and contributions of human piety and charity : And that the Church was instituted by our Blessed Lord, to preserve and propagate the purity of this Faith; *to be the ground and the pillar of truth*, as the Apostle speaks.

And Experience hath since approv'd the same, that when the Church hath been expos'd to rapine and violence, and trampled under foot, by prophaneness and

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faction, that swarms of Heresies and Schisms have sprung up, and so much wickedness and folly and confusion, that there was hardly any face or outward appearance of Christianity amongst us, when within the remembrance of many, God permitted it to be our case and our grief. The purity and unity of the Faith never suffer'd more in any place in this World : And in that miserable state of things, much of our People have lost the sense of three or four of the most important of Christian duties. Loyalty, Church-Communion, Reverence in Divine Worship, and Justice, & Charity for its maintenance.

Notwithstanding what the laws of God, and the laws of the Land command most expressly, about our subjection and faithful obedience and service to the King : Yet many (as we have seen too lately) think themselves at liberty to set up or take down a Prince, as they please, and to chuse whom they shall obey, or whether they shall obey any body at all.

Many also, as appears every where, judg themselves in a state of freedom to be under the guidance of whom they please ; of such a Sect, or of their own brains, as they think most expedient. How far and how long they shall be members of the Church, and whether at all or no, we see how many act in this without any scruple as their interest or fancies determine : And as if nothing were said in holy Scripture of our submission to those that have rule over us, in the Lord, and our obligations to live in the bonds of Unity, and incorporate our selves with that body whereof Christ is the Head and Saviour.

How unseemly is the deportment of many in the house of God ; how little care is taken to make his service venerable and becoming his Greatness we can all witness. The publick attendance upon Religion is in many places

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so unlike divine Worship, so far from being the humble adoration of the Great King of Kings, that it hath not in it so much as that common respect which we pay to our Superiors.

And so it fares with the maintenance of Gods sanctuary and those that wait in it. The free bounty of our Ancestors made large Provisions for this, the laws in that respect now made, cannot keep a great part of the people within any bounds of Justice.

Altho God complains of it, as a Sacriledg, *ye have robbed me in Tythes and Offerings*, and requires the paying of them, as an acceptable peice of service which he promiseth to reward, *Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of thine encrease, so shall thy barns be filled with Plenty, & thy presses shall burst out with new Wines*. Notwithstanding all this, we see how many wilfully transgres as much against the lawful Right, as against the Piety of this Duty.

The neglect of these, I have now mention'd, and many more Evils Destructive of our Christian Faith, was the necessary consequent of the destroying our Ecclesiastical Orders and Constitutions. So that it well becomes every man who wisheth Religion and Vertue to Flourish, to endeavour and contribute what he can to the well being and preservation of this Church, which certainly maintains and teacheth the Primitive and truly Christian Faith, and recommends all duties to God and the King, to our Neighbours and our selves, and leads her Children the plainest and safest way to true Vertue and Happiness. Our appearing concern'd for such a Church, the like to which we should not find in all all the World, should God, for our Sins suffer it to be destroyed ; I say our Affection and care for such a Church is a good demonstration of our love to God, and a Christian contending for the Faith. To help
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to build up and preserve our Jerusalem, that in her peaceable and prosperous settlement, in the use & enjoyment of all means of grace, we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all Godliness and Honesty.

Christians, our Faith was once deliver'd to the Saints, and it was by Gods great Mercy propagat'd to us, to make us Saints also ; that by it we may be now Sanctified, and Glorified hereafter. The more we do now for our Religion, in time of health and prosperity, the more it will do for us hereafter in time of sickness and sorrow. What we now labour or spend for our Christian Faith, is sure to be repaid us, in Spiritual improvements, and joys and comforts. If by a good life we justify it before men, it will justify us before God. This is a rule will ever hold, that Faith is to be shew'd by works : accordingly let us contend for ours. By an open and constant profession of it, by conforming our lives to its rules and precepts, by devoutly attending upon those Acts of Worship and Piety, which are enjoy'd by it, and by giving it in the World all that reputation and establishment of which we are capable in our several places. That's the way to fight the good fight of Faith, and lay hold on eternal life. According to the exhortation of our Apostle wherewith I conclude, having told them v.18. *That there would be mockers in the last times, walking after their own ungodly lusts ; men that would scoff at believers, and deride their credulity :* Then it follows, *But ye beloved hauild up your selves in your most holy Faith, Praying in the Holy Ghost : Keep your selves in the love of God, looking for the mercies of our Lord Jefus Christ unto Eternal Life.* To which God of his infinite mercy bring us. To him Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. One God Blessed for ever be ascrib'd, &c.

E R R A T A. Pref. p. i. 9. before *selves add own.* Sermon, p. 8. l. 3. *Athletes,* p. 9. l. 25. before *relation add our,* p. 12. l. 16. after *sure add and,* p. 17. l. 17. before *diligent add a,* ib. l. 23. for *not* read *more,* p. 18. l. 23. after *understand* *that.*

F I N I S.